



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, Ca. 94105

CERTIFIED MAIL P470 096 010  
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

June 19, 1991  
Richard T. Zitting  
President  
Santa Fe Pacific Mining, Inc.  
6200 Uptown Road, Suite 400  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110

Re: General Notice Letter  
Bluewater Uranium Mining Sites  
Prewitt, New Mexico

Dear Sir:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has documented the release or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants at the Bluewater Uranium Mining Sites. EPA has spent, and will continue to spend, public funds to investigate and control these releases. EPA is conducting these response actions pursuant to Section 104 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, 42 U.S.C. Section 9604, as amended (CERCLA), and Sections 300.410 and 300.415 of the National Contingency Plan (NCP), 40 C.F.R. Part 300. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that EPA has reason to believe that your company may be a potentially responsible party (PRP) with regard to a portion of the Sites, and to notify you of forthcoming removal activities to be conducted at the Sites.

This letter provides formal notification of your company's potential liability pursuant to Section 107(a) of CERCLA, with regard to a portion of the Sites, as described in Enclosure A. It also supplements the oral notification of potential liability which William J. Weis and Robert Bornstein of EPA Region IX's Emergency Response Section provided to your representative, Mr. George G. Byers, on June 5, 1991.

Under Sections 106(a) and 107(a) of CERCLA, PRPs may be required to finance or undertake response actions that EPA determines are necessary to protect public health or welfare or the environment. PRPs may also be liable for all costs incurred by the Government in responding to a release or threatened release at a site, and for damages to natural resources resulting from such a release.

Responsible parties under CERCLA include, among other persons, the current and former owners or operators of a site. Based on information obtained through its investigation of the Bluewater Sites, EPA has determined that your company may be potentially responsible both as a former operator of a portion of the Sites, and as an owner of a property interest in the Sites.

Furthermore, EPA has reason to believe that the release and threatened release of hazardous substances from the uranium mine pit surfaces, mining overburden, and abandoned ore debris and mine tailings at the Bluewater Sites presents an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, welfare or the environment. Based on investigations performed to date, EPA has concluded that a removal action must be conducted at the Sites to: (1) reduce surface emissions of gamma radiation and provide radon gas barriers, and (2) restrict public access to the Sites.

Due to the serious potential health hazards associated with the radiation and radionuclide levels found at the Sites, EPA has concluded that the proposed removal action must begin as soon as possible. By this letter, EPA encourages you to voluntarily perform the Site removal activities specified above. If EPA is unable to reach agreement with you regarding the performance of these activities, EPA may conduct the removal action itself pursuant to Section 104 of CERCLA, or issue an order to your company to conduct the removal. A description of the removal activities which EPA is asking you to perform is contained in Enclosure B to this letter.

Please contact EPA within forty eight (48) hours of receipt of this letter if you wish to perform the Site removal activities described in Enclosure B. If EPA does not receive a timely response from you regarding this matter, the Agency will assume that you decline any present involvement in the proposed removal action. Your response should provide EPA with the name, address, and telephone number of the person to whom EPA should direct future correspondence regarding this matter. This correspondence should be submitted to:

William J. Weis III  
Emergency Response Section  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, H-8-3  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 744-2297

Please direct any legal questions you may have to Linda Wandres of EPA's Office of Regional Counsel, at (415) 744-1359. Questions of a non-legal nature should be directed to Mr. Weis at the above-referenced number.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jerry Clifford", is written over the typed name.

Jerry Clifford  
Deputy Director for Superfund  
Hazardous Waste Management Division

Enclosures

cc: Bill Allen, Regional Environmental Assistant, DOI  
Ray Churan, Regional Environmental Officer, DOI  
Mary Josie Smith, Chief, Hazardous Waste Materials  
Division, DOI  
Joanne Manygoats, Navajo Superfund Program  
Louise Linkin, Navajo EPA  
Capt. Charles O. Dowell, USPHS IHS  
Capt. Bruce R. Chelikowsky, USPHS IHS

#### ENCLOSURE A

The Bluewater Uranium Sites consist of the Brown-Vandever-Nanabah mines and the Navajo-Desiderio mine. The sites are located approximately five miles west of Prewitt, New Mexico. The sites lie within the Ambrosia Lake subdistrict of the Grants Uranium Mining District.

The Brown-Vandever-Nanabah site encompasses two Indian Allotment parcels (Section 18 Township 13N, Range 10W and Section 24, Township 13N, Range 11W), one Federal parcel administered by the Department of Energy (Section 13, Township 13N Range 11W) and one privately owned parcel (Section 19, Township 13N, Range 10W) within the Bluewater Quadrangle.

Based on information obtained to date, EPA has determined that Santa Fe Pacific Mining, Inc. was associated with the mining operations effecting Section 19, Township 13N, Range 10W of the Bluewater Quadrangle. This section consists of several large piles of mine overburden, protore, mine tailings and exposed Todilto limestone containing uranium ore.

ENCLOSURE B  
TASKS TO BE COMPLETED ON SECTION 19, TOWNSHIP 13N, RANGE 10W  
BLUEWATER QUADRANGLE  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTION

- o Conduct extensive ground gamma survey to define and delineate gamma radiation readings within mined areas;
- o Areas defined to exceed 300 uR/hr should be covered with fill to reduce gamma and radon gas emissions. Emissions should be reduce to levels protective of human health and the environment;
- o Covered areas should resist weathering and erosion;
- o Post signs in English, Spanish and Navajo warning local residents of potential radiological hazards.